

26 could

thereon from toppling over and becoming disorganized. The adhesive strip 118 may further be provided in a sterile state.--

In the Drawings:

Please substitute the amended Figure 3 as attached hereto which has been marked up with red ink to show a planar support surface 119.

In the Claims:

↓ ↓

Claims 1-3 and 6-23 are canceled without prejudice to the subject matter contained therein.

Please amend claims 4 and 5 as follows:

Claims 4 and 5 have been amended as follows:

A B 1

4. (Amended) The couple of claim 24, wherein the coupling device comprises a wall portion defining an aperture that is dimensioned and configured to receive adjoining end posts of each instrument organizer when the end posts are disposed in juxtaposition.

5. (Amended) The couple of claim 24, wherein the coupling device comprises a collar including a wall portion having a generally rectangular outer

configuration in cross section and defining an aperture having a generally rectangular configuration for receiving two end posts each having a cubical outer configuration.

Please add the following new claims 24 through 36.

sub 24 --24. (New) A couple for coupling a pair of instrument organizers each of which comprise:

an elongated base structure having a top surface and a front surface and a rear surface extending from the top surface, and the front surface and the rear surface being disposed on opposing sides of the base structure, the elongated base structure comprising a predetermined width as measured from the front surface to the rear surface and the elongated base structure including opposed terminal ends;

at least one upstanding post fixedly positioned at one of the terminal ends of the base structure; and

at least one movable stabilizing structure comprising a body portion and self-gripping means extending away from the body portion and having at least a portion of which engage the front and rear surfaces of the base structure for stabilizing and supporting at least one surgical instrument in a generally upright state at least partially on the organizer and the self-gripping means having a length that is not greater than a height of the base structure;

the couple, comprising:

sub
Died
changed

a coupling device for connecting the pair of instrument

organizers together.

B2

25. (New) The couple of claim 24, wherein the elongated base structure of each instrument organizer is dimensioned and configured to support only one end of a surgical instrument, the elongated base structure also being dimensioned and configured to be mounted on a planar support surface which supports another end of the surgical instrument

CR8
Amended
sub

26. (New) The couple of claim 24, wherein:

the body portion of each instrument organizer includes an upwardly extending post comprising a first side surface and a second side surface that each define a plane that extends in a direction that is generally perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the elongated base structure when the movable stabilizing structure is mounted to the elongated base structure;

the self-gripping means of each instrument organizer comprises a pair of self-gripping legs that each include a first side surface and a second side surface each of which defines a plane that also extends in a direction that is generally perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the elongated base structure when the movable stabilizing structure is mounted to the elongated base structure; and

the plane defined by the first side surface of the upwardly extending post of each instrument organizer and the planes defined by the first side surfaces of

Sub
D
Cont'd

the self-gripping legs are generally coplanar and the plane defined by the second side surface of the upwardly extending post and the planes defined by the second side surfaces of the self-gripping legs are generally coplanar.

27. (New) The couple of claim 24, wherein the elongated base and the movable stabilizing structure of each instrument organizer is composed of a lint free foam plastic.

28. (New) The couple of claim 24, wherein the coupling device is composed of a lint free foam plastic.

29. (New) A couple for coupling a pair of instrument organizers for at least partially supporting surgical instruments each of which comprise:

an elongated base having a uniform, predetermined width and defining a continuous surface extending from a first side surface to an opposing second side surface thereof, the elongated base including two terminal ends;

at least one fixed post extending from one of said terminal ends of the base; and

at least one movable stabilizing structure including two self-gripping legs extending generally parallel to each other and from a central body, the self-gripping legs having opposing, inwardly facing surfaces spaced-apart a distance substantially equal to the predetermined width of the base of the instrument organizer, the opposing, inwardly facing surfaces of the two self-gripping legs

being dimensioned and configured to solely grip the first and second side surfaces of the base of the instrument organizer, respectively, so that the movable stabilizing structure is attachable to the base of the instrument organizer and the central body is held in place by the self-gripping legs for retaining the surgical instruments in an organized and upright state partially on the organizer; and wherein:

the central body of the movable stabilizing structure includes an upwardly extending post comprising a first side surface and a second side surface that each define a plane that extends in a direction that is generally perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the elongated base when the movable stabilizing structure is mounted to the elongated base;

each self-gripping leg of the movable stabilizing structure including a first side surface and a second side surface each of which defines a plane that also extends in a direction that is generally perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the elongated base when the movable stabilizing structure is mounted to the elongated base; and

the plane defined by the first side surface of the upwardly extending post and the planes defined by the first side surfaces of the self-gripping legs are generally coplanar and the plane defined by the second side surface of the upwardly extending post and the planes defined by the second side surfaces of the self-gripping legs are generally coplanar;

the couple, comprising:

a coupling device for connecting the pair of instrument

B4 organizers together

sub
D
center

30. (New) The couple of claim 29, wherein the coupling device comprises a wall portion defining an aperture that is dimensioned and configured to receive adjoining end posts of each instrument organizer when the end posts are disposed in juxtaposition.

31. (New) The couple of claim 29, wherein the coupling device comprises a collar including a wall portion having a generally rectangular outer configuration in cross section and defining an aperture having a generally rectangular configuration for receiving two end posts each having a cubical outer configuration.

32. (New) The couple of claim 29, wherein the elongated base and the movable stabilizing structure of each instrument organizer is composed of a lint free foam plastic.

33. (New) The couple of claim 29, wherein the coupling device is composed of a lint free foam plastic.

34. (New) The couple of claim 29, wherein a height of the elongated base of the instrument organizer is greater than a length of the self-gripping legs such

Sub D1 context
that a bottom surface of the central body will grip the continuous surface of the elongated base.

As. context
35. (New) The couple of claim 29, wherein a height of the elongated base of the instrument organizer is approximately equal to a length of the self-gripping legs such that a bottom surface of the central body will grip the continuous surface of the elongated base.

36. (New) The couple of claim 29, further comprising a double sided self adhesive strip attached to a bottom surface of the elongated base of the instrument organizer. —

REMARKS

The Office action comprising a restriction requirement mailed July 1, 2002 addressed claims 1-23. In particular, each of claims 1-23 were stated to be the subject of a species/restriction requirement under 35 USC §121. In response, claims 1-3 and 6-23 are canceled, the specification, drawings, and claims 4 and 5 are amended above and claims 24-36 are added to more particularly point out and distinctly claim Applicants' invention. Accordingly, claims 4, 5, and 24-36 are now pending in the present application. Attached hereto is an Appendix